

## V

### THE ETHICS OF SPINOZA

FOR a century after his death, Spinoza's name was anathema, and the accounts of his philosophy taxed the lexicon of vituperation. Then in the German Enlightenment and Romanticism, abuse yielded to admiration; the erstwhile atheist and impostor became the "God-intoxicated man," and Spinozism almost a synonym for philosophy. Though in the course of the last hundred years this cult of Spinoza has yielded to more thorough if less worshipful appreciation, he has not been 'explained' or 'placed,' nor his system reduced to a formula: a mark of the vitality no less than of the subtle complexity of his thought. Most variously interpreted of all the great thinkers of the seventeenth century, Spinoza reflects or rather integrates in critical creative synthesis the many fertile strains of his age. Thus he aroused immediately various partisan reactions, and ever since has tempted special pleaders, only to disappoint them in the end.

Ideas were living forces to Spinoza, forces in living well or ill, and this conviction determined his conception of the aim of philosophy. Real knowledge is not neutral or passive, and Spinoza's own knowledge was not mere book-learning. He lived with his library, but not in it. The *Theologico-Political Treatise* is an erudite book, but it is a pioneer document of Biblical criticism; its object is to undermine bibliolatry of all sorts. Spinoza interrupted his *Ethics* to write this classic of unshackled thinking and to hoist the flag of criticism in the very citadel of traditional conformity.

To enter into the religion of thought and truth, men must first be emancipated from the idolatry of words and dogma.

Three centuries ago, in 1632, Baruch de Spinoza was born in Amsterdam, the descendant of Spanish-Portuguese Jews who had escaped to Holland because of religious persecution. Rebelling against Spanish despotism, the Dutch provinces had earned their independence and established a state of tolerance. From all parts of Europe those who chafed under oppression came to the Netherlands; energy and intelligence of a high order were at the service of free institutions. That the Dutch had any special liking for the Jews or invited them to immigrate, does not appear to have been the case; but they came anyhow; they settled and prospered, and by the time of Spinoza a considerable Jewish colony had grown in Amsterdam. While not altogether lacking in intelligent leadership, they were as a rule clannish; their new freedom seemed to have made them the more bigoted.

As soon as Spinoza's mental abilities were recognized, the rabbis had their eyes on him; but it was not long before he became a source of great worry to the orthodox. Quick to understand exposition of doctrine, he was as quick to criticize; rabbinical reasoning was apt to crumble under his probing; nor was he satisfied with Biblical and Talmudic studies. A new science and a new philosophy were stirring the world: these he wanted to know, but for this purpose he had to learn Latin, the language of the Catholic oppressors of his race. So the most brilliant and learned young mind in the Amsterdam synagogue seemed bound to abandon Jewish orthodoxy. Could he be headed off? The rabbis and elders tried admonition and bargaining first. They offered him a stipend of one thousand florins, on the condition that he remain outwardly conformist and attend the

synagogue with fair regularity. This rabbinical inducement Spinoza rejected with calm disdain; but the effort to buy his silence confirmed him in the decision to which he had been tending, to leave the synagogue. The attempt of a fanatic to assassinate him put this resolution into effect: he left the city and retired to one of the suburbs. The Amsterdam congregation thereupon excommunicated him and cast him off as an unbeliever.

Spinoza proceeded to establish himself as a scholar and a grinder of lenses; the craft nourished his interest in optics, and besides offered him an opportunity to think while working. His philosophical studies brought him in touch with liberal groups in Holland and with some of the best minds in Europe. He devoted particular attention to the rationalistic philosophy and scientific method of René Descartes. This new rationalism satisfied, but it also challenged his own demand for intellectual clarity. Here was a method aiming at demonstration, not leaning on dogmatic authority, not content with probability, bent on conclusiveness. Yet it was unconvincing. Its analysis of Nature could not get beyond an ambiguous dualism of mind and body on the one hand and of these and God on the other. Such a theory of reality Spinoza could not accept as the final science and philosophy.

We should keep in mind from the outset the ethical motivation of Spinoza's philosophy. He seeks a scientific method, but his purpose is more properly described as moral-religious. He does not pursue knowledge for its own sake, but as enlightenment, that he may find his path and keep to it. We should not be misled by Spinoza's deliberate and insistent naturalistic method into confusing him with the naturalists in aim. The spur to his search after truth is not the Aristotelian: "All men by nature desire to know."

Spinoza's philosophy issues from a spiritual emergency: "I perceived that I was in a state of great peril, and I compelled myself to seek with all my strength for a remedy, however uncertain it might be; as a sick man struggling with a deadly disease, when he sees that death will surely be upon him unless a remedy is found. . . ." This urgent character of Spinoza's thought makes the title of his crowning work, the *Ethics*, no accident, as it certainly is not a misnomer. His entire thought points to an Ethics as its apex. Witness the themes of his other treatises, finished and unfinished: *On God, Man, and His Well-Being*; *On the Improvement of the Understanding*; *On Theology and Politics*; *On Politics*: these are so many programs of individual and social reform through enlightenment. Even the *Hebrew Grammar* has a practical aim: the more complete diagnosis and cure of bibliolatry and intolerance. Spinoza's philosophy would map the way to the blessed life: wherein and how is human perfection to be found, the obstacles to it, and the surmounting of the obstacles.

But if ethics is to be the fruit of Spinoza's philosophy, its roots must rest in the soil of a true doctrine of nature. The great emergency makes him doubly cautious. He needs the truth, and so must have the facts. Perfection through understanding means that ethics must be based on metaphysics and physics. To perceive truly man's path to perfection, understanding of human nature is required, and to know human nature truly, we must know man's place in nature, and so the nature and constitution of all things.

Whereas common opinion or imagination perceives things in random confusion, rational knowledge discloses order, necessary connection, and ultimate unity. If we only think, we are bound to recognize that there can be only one ultimate World-Principle or Substance, infinite, eternal, self-deter-

mined. We may call it God, or we may call it Nature: fundamental ground and being of all that there is. Its boundless plenitude of reality must involve or include an infinitude of aspects or attributes, each attribute characteristically constituting its essence. Two such attributes we perceive, matter and mind. Nature is thus both extended body and thinking mind. Matter and mind are not two parts or two types, but two aspects or versions of the one world-order. There cannot be, therefore, any interaction between them, but the two attributes or aspects of the one substance are thoroughly parallel or corresponding to each other. All that exists is a state or modification of the one ultimate Nature, extended or thinking. Look at the world on the surface only, and you see random variety and lumping of particulars; but see more deeply into the heart of things, and you will perceive them all as waves in and of the one ocean. Their true being is Nature, and this integral being of them all is the true nature of each. They are what they are ultimately in God, and their character is thus eternally determined.

Of decisive and far-reaching importance, as even the briefest statement of Spinoza's metaphysics shows, is the thoroughly naturalistic doctrine of universal necessity. The God-Substance is the infinite source and ground of all things, but not in the sense of its creatively willing them. Things are not what they are because God so wills them. The expression God or Nature is here crucial. God is Nature for Spinoza, the infinite cosmic order. All that is or takes place manifests the eternal necessity of nature. There is no chance or arbitrariness or spontaneity in the cosmos. The idea of freedom is due to a confusion: ignorant of the causes of our actions, we imagine them undetermined. As well might a roof-tile falling to the ground imagine

itself as having a free adventure. All things are unconditionally as they must be, or better, they are what they *are*.

With the utter exclusion of all chance or cosmic alternative, this doctrine likewise rules out all design in nature. It is not a matter of chance nor is it a matter of choice or preference or purpose that the sum of the angles in a triangle is what it is. So all that exists follows necessarily from God's infinite essence: itself eternally self-determined. The phrase 'self-determined' here should not mislead us. All that a triangle or a tree or a traitor are or do, reveals their respective natures and is in that sense self-determined, that is, would be different only if they were something else. God's self-determination likewise expresses the necessary eternal self-manifestation of infinite nature. Reality is a structure available for analysis, and as we thus learn what things are or are not, we realize that the terms 'should' or 'ought,' praise or blame, regret or preference have no real place in the cosmos. The whole vocabulary of evaluation, perfection or the reverse in all its forms, has meaning only and always in relation to a particular demand necessarily characteristic of a particular nature. Meat is good for the hungry and drink for the thirsty and a boat for the shipwrecked mariner, and all things are good for him whom they suit or to whom they are useful. But that any of these things are really good or bad is an unwarrantable addition of our own. "In Nature there is no good and no evil;" all things simply are what they are, and the better we understand, the more content we are with understanding. To blame a man because he cannot see this alleged beauty or ugliness, or this so-called perfection or ignominy, is as if we were to blame a blind man because he cannot see. All perception and reaction are relative to the perceiver's nature. Had you the eyes of a sculptor, you would see the beauty

of the hand, but "the most beautiful hand when seen through a microscope will appear horrible." Instead, therefore, of mistakenly ascribing to God the value-distinctions which are always relative to our particular selves, we are enabled by our understanding to perceive evaluation as well as all other reactions as necessary manifestations of specific nature, and thus as ultimately manifestations of the whole. But as we thus perceive the truth, we realize that Nature is not to be praised or blamed either ultimately or in detail, but both ultimately and in detail is to be analyzed and understood. This in particular is to characterize the intelligent study of human nature. The philosopher who had begun his study from urgent spiritual need, has learned and would teach us this wisdom of dispassionate objective naturalism. This he sets as a principle of procedure before himself in his treatment of human nature, individual and social. In the Introduction to his *Political Treatise* and at the beginning of Third Part of the *Ethics*, Spinoza records his resolution: "Not to mock, lament, or execrate, but to understand human actions. . . . Nothing comes to pass in nature, which can be set as a flaw therein; for nature is always the same, and everywhere one and the same in her efficacy and power of action. . . . Thus the passions of hatred, anger, envy, and so on, considered in themselves, follow from this same necessity and efficacy of nature; . . . I shall, therefore, treat of the nature and strength of the emotions according to the same method. . . . I shall consider human actions and desires in exactly the same manner, as though I were concerned with lines, planes, and solids."

Is this only a sober resolution to abstain from moralizing, or is it a view of human nature which affects the very possibility of ethics? The fuller implications of this principle are disclosed in Spinoza's geometry of the passions, a

doctrine which has remained a classic to this day. We shall not here rehearse it in any detail, but shall consider it only in its ethical corollaries.

In common with all things in nature, man is moved to persist in his own being. This persistence is not any occult endowment, but simply the distinctive nature of the person or thing in question. A man's way of self-preservation manifests a man's character and place and relation to other objects: for the perfection of a man, or of a hatchet, Spinoza observes, is in each "serving God," that is, in each playing its respective rôle, whatever it be. A molecule persists in its being as long as in its nature it can, and so does a man, but a man is conscious of his endeavor and persistence. This endeavor, mentally regarded, we call will; taking account of body and mind together, we call the endeavor appetite, and the appetite with the consciousness of itself, desire. Will, appetite, desire are not determined by, but themselves determine our judgments of good and evil. It is not because we deem a thing good that we desire it, but on the contrary it is because we desire it that we deem it good: a bold glance ahead across centuries of psychological analysis.

The actual persistence of a thing, its effective self-maintenance, is its power, and, Spinoza adds, that is its virtue. "By virtue and power I mean the same thing." When we speak of a yeast or of a medicine as having lost its virtue, we express the right meaning of the term, which we should retain in our treatment of man. "If the salt have lost its savour (that is, its saltiness, its power, its virtue) where-with shall it be salted?" In our relation to the rest of nature, we are affected, body and mind, by other things, persistence clashing with persistence. Self-maintenance and expansion, with the consciousness thereof, or else the sense of being curbed and in a measure undone, are primary experiences.



These two, Pleasure and Pain, with Desire, Spinoza regards as the basic elements of our passions. As virtue is synonymous with power, so perfection is self-maintenance and rise in power, and pleasure, an emotion whereby the mind rises to a greater perfection; pain is the reverse.

We may say that desire is vital drive in a man, and pleasure or pain the sense of heightened or lowered vitality. Pleasure thus regarded is always good, and pain always bad. This view guides Spinoza's further account and classification of the emotions. Pleasure and pain accompanied by the idea of an external cause are love or hate respectively. We try to imagine, to anticipate, or to keep in mind whatever enhances our vitality; by association or imagination a variety of emotions arise which he defines or explains: hope, confidence, joy, on the one hand, and on the other, fear, despair, disappointment; approval and indignation; sympathy and envy; complacency and humility, honor and shame, and so forth.

The application of Spinoza's initial principles leads to some estimates perplexing to traditional moral judgment and points to his program of moral reform through enlightenment. Thus pity, he thinks, is in itself bad, and so are remorse and repentance, and likewise humility: in them all men are rendered wretched or infirm, and pain in itself is always evil. But pleasure, while in itself good, may be due to an idea of rising perfection or vitality, which the facts of life do not bear out. Man may be miserable because of his failure to see things in their proper setting or relation, or he may pleasantly imagine himself prosperous when he is actually on the path to ruin.

Such is the nature of passion, furthermore, that it may take entire possession of a man. An emotion or passion expresses our own power and persistent self-maintenance,

but also the power of other things acting on us. This power of other things may so overwhelm or usurp a man's attention as to yield a distorted view of oneself in relation to other things. A man's whole being, as a result, may flame up in anger or jealousy or overweening vainglory as the case may be. This is indeed the usual course of human passion, and recognizing it, men have proposed heroic remedies. Most radical is the Stoic program of utter repression of emotion, the ideal of apathy, passionless reasonable existence. But this proposed remedy reflects a mistaken idea of our constitution. In view of what has been observed already, a complete extinction of the emotions would register, not the victory of the intellect, but its own extinction of activity in relation with the body. Man's very life and being is a tissue and a course of emotions; mind and body coöperate or rather reflect each other in the counterplay of passions. The contest, therefore, is always a contest of emotions. The remedy, if remedy there be, cannot consist in the action of reason on passion directly, to subdue or repress it altogether. The action can only be that of an idea on an idea. And precisely here we should be reminded that the passion which a thing may be said to arouse in us essentially springs from a certain view or idea which we have of that thing. Change our idea of that thing, and our emotional state or passion also changes. The action of the mind whereby one idea prevails over another is thus not the mastery of thought over emotion, but the replacement of one emotion by another. Understand a passion, that is, perceive the idea of which it is the emotional correspondent, and it ceases to be a passion: the emotion of the other prevailing idea has replaced it. If there is to be a moral reform and perfection of man,—something of which Spinoza initially felt the need gravely, but regarding the meaning of which in his philosophy we are

yet to be informed,—it cannot be by the Stoic plan of apathy but through some enlightenment which replaces inadequate by more adequate emotions. If the moral outlook of man has thus revealed the range of passion, moral progress would seem to involve its culture.

But are we warranted by Spinoza in using the terms reform and progress at all, and is not the expression 'perfection of man' now being charged with a significance for which we have not been prepared, and which indeed Spinoza's naturalism seems to rule out? How is Spinoza's reason to explain to itself the nature of the good for which it now seeks provision in nature? In other words, though Spinoza deliberately set out in pursuit of ethics, what ethics, if any, is he to attain or afford in terms of his cosmology?

We have now come to what is for us the crucial issue in Spinoza's philosophy. That it imposes this issue by its thoroughness and integrity of procedure is one of its chief merits. Spinoza has been lauded as standing "supreme and almost unique in that, within the sweep of a naturalistic metaphysic, he yet found room for all that is highest and best in man." It is important to understand what highest and best could signify in Spinozism.

On the level of common opinion or imagination on which most men live their lives, what can these terms or any moral standards mean? The plaything or battle-ground of passion and external influences, subject to prejudices, and the victim of partialities neither thought out nor harmonized, the usual life of men lacks order, or if it has it, the order is unreasonable and spurious, bigotry stubborn yet unreliable. This is human servitude. We can describe it in terms which connote condemnation, but if we objectively regard men as living and active on that level, what would justify either praise or condemnation of their behavior? True, men on

this level imagine or opine that some things are good for them and others bad. But each passion as understood by reason is laid alongside the others on the same level plane of factual necessity: nature being always and everywhere the same and acting with the same efficacy. In the life of passion there are intense likes and dislikes, but no defensible preference and therefore no moral judgment.

The vital impulse and effort at self-preservation grows into avid and unreasoning selfishness. It makes men rivals and enemies, as Hobbes had already noted. On a clear day the ailing Spinoza would step down into the sunny court of his lodgings, and catching a fly would put it into a spider's web to watch the ensuing struggle and to meditate on the similar lives of men,—flies and spiders struggling in the web of existence. The fear of harm is stronger than the desire to harm, and so men submit for the sake of security. This is the way in which most men conform to political authority, and this counsel of submission is the most immediate remedy which the disorder of the life of passion requires. Legality is, as it were, morality *pro tem.*, keeping the peace by holding men in bounds, by a system of statutes and customs and institutions, like reins or blinders, to limit and direct the daily course of life. Theological creeds and ecclesiastic regimes serve the same end, imposing order on those who otherwise would lack it. So Goethe has summed it up for Spinoza in a pithy stanza:

He who possesses art and science,  
Has also religion;  
He who these two does not possess,  
Does need a religion.

The state and the church, which curb lawless men, may and do also shackle men of intelligence. In individual and in social life, in action, speech and thought, Spinoza cham-

pioned a regime of tolerance, so that men capable of rising above the anarchy of passion into the republic of reason may not be hindered from so doing. This great advantage to the individual would redound to the state, which would thus have not only subjects but also citizens.

On the level of opinion in the life of passion there can be no real moral activity. This, according to Spinoza, is the achievement of reason in the enlightened life. How and wherein does enlightenment attain to moral values? The answer requires explicit recognition of Spinoza's distinction between passive and active emotion. In vulgar passion the mind is acted upon by external factors which it does not understand adequately; it is thus passive, and its emotion is rightly called passion. When a man attains an adequate idea of whatever may be engaging him, in seeing things as they are and his relation to them in nature, his emotion expresses his characteristic activity in the circumstances; we may well call it not passion but action. As our fragmentary and confused impressions, through rational enlightenment, become clear and adequate, our passion ceases to be a passion and becomes an active emotion. Thanks to intelligence, we are no longer imposed on (in both senses of that term), but gain a larger measure of self-possession through self-understanding, that is, active self-expression.

To have an adequate idea of anything and so to be truly active with respect to that thing, means to see the relation of that thing and of ourselves in Nature. We see things clearly and adequately as we see them in their cosmic setting, in their universal context, or as Spinoza puts it, in the light or under the pattern of eternity. Intelligence is understanding of the order of Nature and the vision of things in their necessary rôle and relation therein. The very perception of the cosmically necessary inspires reasonableness. As we recognize the

eternal order of things, we are emancipated from confused petulance into the clear serenity of reason. From naïve provincialism we grow into philosophic cosmic citizenship. Our whole thought is pervaded by the certainty of the perfect God-Substance in which and of which all things are. This serene exalted perfection of rational insight Spinoza calls the intellectual, that is to say the understanding love of God.

This gradual thorough possession of human life by reason has important practical consequences. The effort at self-preservation in the life of ignorance and passion, as we have seen, makes us avidly grasp or resist things external to ourselves, quite confused and uncomprehending as to what is happening to us. Man is selfish, but he does not understand himself or his interests, and his greed is thus unavailing. As we gain in intelligence, we come to perceive what it is all about, and so our own appropriate demand, province, prospect, activity. But as we thus rationally find ourselves in the cosmos, we no longer as before find others in our way. To the pursuer of truth every other pursuer is a fellow-seeker. The sharing in wisdom and reasonableness makes all men free comrades. The emotional life of an actively intelligent man Spinoza calls a life of fortitude, distinguishing in it courage and generosity, rational self-preservation and sober-mindedness, and friendly coöperation. The socially cementing power of generous intelligence is pointed out in the *Ethics*: "Minds are conquered not by arms, but by love and magnanimity." Man alone of all things in the world has a unique claim on man. All else we may use, preserve or destroy as suits our need. Human beings alone have a dignity which we are bound to respect. Nor does a rational man desire for himself anything by way of exclusive privilege, but all his demands are such as admit of being universalized. A rational man needs nothing more than a society of reason-

able men, and in it alone can live in real concord. St. John had reported the words of Jesus: "Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." Spinoza might well have added: "Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you one."

On the principle of self-preservation in the higher, rational sense, enlightened men will thus seek to secure a larger promise of enlightenment for others by advocating and working for a system of social, religious, and political freedom and tolerance. "Since there is no single thing we know which is more excellent than a man who is guided by reason, it follows that there is nothing by which a person can better show how much skill and talent he possesses than by so educating men that at last they will live under the direct authority of reason." Spinoza's works are classics in the philosophy of liberalism and democracy, and of joyous freedom through the discipline of intelligence. The actions of the sage are not motivated by the fear of evil or punishment, but by clear perception of the good and wholehearted adoption of it. "He who acts rightly from the true knowledge and love of right, acts with freedom and constancy, whereas he who acts from fear of evil, is under the constraint of evil, and acts in bondage under external control." As man comes to recognize his own realization in the life of knowledge and truth, this virtue of active reasonableness needs no other reward, itself being blessed. A life thus ordered is not poisoned by futile worries or useless regrets; no impatience or indignation with the ignorant multitude, no lamenting over bodily ills; in the clear perception of the cosmic order the entire life of the wise man is active, positive, constructive, serene. "A free man thinks of nothing less than of death, and his wisdom is not a meditation upon death but upon life." The virtues of reasonableness, the quest and the possession of truth are self-

rewarding whether there be an eternity for the individual or not. About immortality in the more traditional sense, Spinoza has little to say, but there is an eternity of which he is assured: the eternity of the purely rational unity of man with God in the possession and love of the truth.

This was not only an ethical theory which Spinoza was expounding, but the active principle by which he lived his own life. His daily career, private and public, has the rounded consistency of a circle, the particular acts like radii all issuing from or pointing to the same center of rationality. In what other philosopher is there less to blame or condone or explain away? A synagogue conclave seeks to induce him to make his life a lie for a thousand florins; failing in this, the elders of the congregation anathematize him; a fanatic tries to assassinate him; Spinoza waves no red rags nor yet raises the white flag, but withdraws to grind his lenses and to think the ideas that are to be his answer and to win the long day for him. After his father's death, a rapacious sister uses his excommunication as a pretext to deprive him of his share in his patrimony. This threat to justice Spinoza resists, goes to law, wins his case; but, the principle of right once established, he does not claim his share of the estate, keeping only one bed as a visible proof of reaffirmed justice. He declines the offers of French *grandeues* to secure the profitable goodwill of Louis XIV by dedicating a book to him; and distrustful, he does not at first consent to have his unpublished *Ethics* communicated to Leibniz, who had gone to France on a mission suspected by Spinoza to threaten the prospects of religious tolerance in Europe. But he is ready to write treatises especially for humble students of philosophy who seek the truth, and to correspond at length with obscure strangers who ask for enlightenment from him. A professorship at Heidelberg is offered him; he declines the honor, uncertain



of the degree of freedom or the likely interference with his own studies which the post might involve. Great Hollanders and rich press upon him funds and endowments; he is reluctant to accept, and what he does take goes largely for precious volumes needed in his studies. His *Theologico-Political Treatise* undermines the basis of traditional orthodoxy, but he addresses himself explicitly to those who can think critically, to philosophical readers. The rest he asks not to read his book. He practices the tolerance which he advocates; he does not deride the simple faith of his landlady, but assures her that she will indeed be saved; he does not upset tender minds which are not capable of grasping his critical ideas. There is in him no envy, no jealousy, no rancor, no pretense. He spends his days in the seclusion of his room, yet converses profitably with great minds and simple. Though he does not himself cultivate, yet he appreciates for others the cheer and gaiety of social life or the theatre. He does not seek the smoke and tumult of warriorship; these are not for him; his blows for freedom are to be in the realm of thought. But when an infuriated mob murders with unspeakable brutality the champion of Dutch liberalism, Spinoza's landlord has to use force to keep him from sallying forth at the peril of his life in the cause of freedom. He writes his masterwork, the *Ethics*, which he believes to contain the true philosophy, but he seems to care nothing about fame and would have it published anonymously so that his ideas, the truth, may have a more impartial and better chance of being considered on their merits. A fatal disease is sapping his life, and he knows it; he labors unremittingly to the last to finish his work, practicing his precept to think not of death but of life. On all who know him personally he leaves a lasting impression of courage without bluster, cheerfulness without frivolity, generous dignity of spirit, a spirit of crystal truth, serenity, and love.

Who can read Spinoza's works or the pages of his life without perceiving the lofty morality attained by him in theory and in practice? Clearly, one may say, it is possible and a fact that an explicitly naturalistic cosmology may well include a noble ethical doctrine individual and social. But how is this inclusion accomplished by Spinoza? Is it simply at the price of consistency, or may we not here trace a deeper strain in his philosophy, implied and demanded though not explicitly wrought out? Spinoza's enlightened serenity, the objectivity of the sage, expresses the ever clearer perception of the universal necessity in which all things are as they are. But is there not something sinister in this sublime benignity? We are told, *Tout comprendre c'est tout pardonner*. But would not Spinoza rather say that to understand all is to realize that there is nothing to pardon? The sage with a cosmic sense of humor, which is perhaps the essence of philosophic wisdom, comes to see all the alleged ills and troubles, passions and turmoils of men, each in its place as natural parts of the Whole. To see things in the light or under the pattern of eternity, to see things in God or Nature, is to see them objectively.

Shall we call this perfect view of things serene, or shall we call it callous? It would perhaps depend on how seriously we take the moral antithesis of good and evil. We saw that in the life of ignorant opinion and passion there is no real good or evil, though men be moved and troubled by imagined goods and ills. In the sight of God, that is in the universal order of Nature, things are as they are and there is no flaw or evil; but this does not mean that all things are good in the moral sense of the term. That there is no flaw or evil cosmically means simply that things are not other than in their nature they can be. Perfection here would correspondingly mean things being what they necessarily are, and the term

good would accordingly become a synonym for actual. In God's sight all things are perfect: nothing is something else, and everything is itself.

Can this, then, be the course of enlightenment in Spinoza's ethics, leading us from the petulant self-engrossment in spurious imagined good and evil to the serene divine realization that there is no good to be distinguished from any evil? The terrified child in Goethe's ballad sees and hears the Erl-king; the father is disturbed that the child fails to see that there is nothing to be disturbed about. But in God's sight the child's terror and the father's worry alike are as the dry leaves stirred by the wind. Moral insight here paradoxically seems to point to its own transcendence. Spinoza seems to say, It is good to perceive, beyond imagined good and evil, the eternal order and actuality of things as they simply are. Full spiritual maturity would then involve the outgrowing of the moral. Just as legality was seen to be a morality *pro tem.*, so morality in turn is only in passing: a stage in the growing pains of intelligence, itself the gradual transition from likes and dislikes, scruples and preferences, to the serene knowledge of the actual as necessary.

There appears no way of avoiding these corollaries if we proceed from Spinoza's explicitly naturalistic cosmology. But as we read Spinoza, and in particular the last part of the *Ethics*, we are bound to realize that he did not intend the conclusion just articulated to be the last word of his philosophy. To take morality seriously means not only to maintain that it is better *for us* to see things rationally, but that it is better for us to see them thus. The doctrine that all things are as they are in the universal necessity of nature need not imply that all things are on a par. A person may not be to blame for not being as wise as another, yet after all, we should say, he *is* not as wise. God or Nature, while owning

him, may yet reverse Touchstone's apology for Audrey: "Mine own, but an ill-favored thing!" The crow sings according to the laws of nature and presumably does his best; all the same, the crow is no nightingale. So in the moral scale. If the enlightenment which Spinoza advocates *is* good, then ultimately as well as immediately it is not on a par with ignorance; it is better, not merely different.

There is a meaning to the question, What ought I to do? as well as in the question, What must I do, what am I bound to do, being what I am? But this can only be if the thoroughly active achieving character of personality in some way corresponds to and indeed expresses the essential character of Nature: that it is not merely a level set geometric structure available for analysis, but is itself a hierarchical activity. The more perfect anything is, the more reality it has and the more active it is. "It is as impossible for us to conceive God inactive as to conceive him non-existent." The gradual enlightenment of the sage would then be more than episodic; it would be rather an epitome or the main theme of the cosmos. Of this more serious estimate of morality and of this more active or should one say more dramatic conception of Nature there is no lack of evidence in Spinoza's philosophy. It is not a concession to anthropomorphism; God is Nature, not a personality; we can have no human discourse with him. But the achieving of perfection, the intelligent pursuit and realization of the good is in and of the constitution of Nature or God. "He who loves God cannot strive that God should love him in return," but man's intellectual love of God is eternal, and "the very love of God with which God loves himself, not in so far as he is infinite, but in so far as he can be expressed through the essence of the human mind considered under the species of eternity." Not only mechanical, causal structures disclose the pattern or constitution of Na-

ture; enlightenment, achieving of perfection, spirit, activity also disclose it, and more deeply. "He who clearly and distinctly understands himself and his emotions loves God, and so much the more in proportion as he more understands himself and his emotions." The clear knowledge, Spinoza had written in the *Short Treatise*, "comes, not from our being convinced by reasons, but from our feeling and enjoying the thing itself," and he further speaks of God as one and the same with Truth. Advance in intelligence is achievement of God. Spiritual activity is thus not only man's life in God, but also God's life in man; spiritual endeavor is cosmically important and significant, and intelligence, an index of the Ultimate.

There is a higher naturalism in Spinoza revealing the meagre actualism of the lower. In reaction against crude anthropomorphism, he articulates a cosmology of factual structure. This is his geometry of the universe; this is *God or Nature*. But alongside of Spinoza the positive scientist is Spinoza the sage, a hermit of reason wedded to perfection, pious with the piety of Nature. If the expression *God or Nature* sums up Spinoza's geometry of the cosmos, that is to say, his knowledge, the wisdom of Spinoza, his religious-moral insight and mellow conviction requires the completing expression *Nature or God*. These two elements in Spinoza's philosophy are counteracting and complementary. Though we must analyze and explain in order to understand nature, yet it is not a fossil, frozen world-structure but a vital reality, and man's own intelligence in its career is an index and an earnest of its plenitude of active character. Though structural analysis is the outstanding feature of Spinoza's thought, dynamic finalism is its basic strain. The repudiator of Divine Providence and anthropomorphic design in nature moves towards the idea of a deeper immanent tele-

ology, and the conviction of it is the pantheistic ground-note that sounds through the naturalism of Spinoza. Man's utmost of spiritual reach and moral endeavor is not futile or finally indifferent; in its best citizens the Commonwealth of Reality is attaining its own high emprise. "Be comforted," Pascal heard the Savior say to him, "you would not seek me had you not found me. . . . Your conversion is my own concern. Fear not and pray with confidence, as if for me." Is the story told by the Persian sage Jalálud-din really different in purport? "One knocked at the Beloved's door, and a voice asked from within, 'Who is there?' and he answered, 'It is I.' Then the voice said, 'This house will not hold me and thee.' And the door was not opened. Then went the lover into the desert, and fasted and prayed in solitude. And after a year he returned and knocked again at the door. And again the voice asked, 'Who is there?' and he said, 'It is Thysel!' and the door was opened to him."

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